

Mo Dheifiúr agus Mise

Unheard, uncounted, unloved. Never united. This Kingdom, this Great Britain. The oxymoron of the name could make you laugh if you weren't so busy trying not to scream in anger and frustration.

Because this is happening, this is real. And most of the time, scared is the only way I know how to feel.

I'm an adult now, I can make my own decisions and I've decided to give my Irish roots some recognition. Because I am proud of who I am and where my family has come from. It's not something to be scared of, it's not something to run from.

In the wake of the Brexit referendum, in the months of shambles that have followed the action that Scotland and Northern Ireland didn't agree on, my sister and I began our own quiet rebellion. We'd started separately, working alone but soon we discovered we both had found a new language for our home. From our home. We're learning Gaelic, speaking it together, embracing our near and distant past as a way to deal with the worries of our uncertain future.

The language, that shouldn't be foreign to us, is slowly working its way into our conversations. We struggle and smile as our Scottish accents wrap around the Ulster dialect of Irish once spoken by our grandparents and great-grandparents and further back through the generations. The families that started in Letterkenny and Newry made their way to Scotland throughout the past century and somewhere along the way, the language was lost in the sea that divided our old home from our new.

Now, with more divisions on the horizon, our beautifully Celtic stubborn nature and family-pride has encouraged us to be active in maintaining that connection. To let it grow out of love and interest, out of want and hope. Not out of fear and necessity or out of anger and spite. We could very easily get by in the world with English. We choose to learn and speak Irish. We choose our *bhaile*. It doesn't mean that Scotland isn't our home anymore, far from it. It just means we've opened the borders in our hearts and minds to include another place to call home. Who wouldn't want that?

We now say "*Mara duit!*" instead of "Hi!", "goodnight" between us has become "*oíche mhaith*". When I helped her move into university, we parted with a "*Slán!*" instead of "Goodbye!" and honestly, on the train home I nearly cried. Because we're Scottish girls with Irish names and I don't know how things are going to change. We're both adults now, living further apart than ever but in these past few months we've been brought closer together. I was worried that being far apart would get us out of the habit, but days after she moved, she replied to my text with "*go raibh maith agat*".

My dad evens joins in now and then, the Irish words and phrases of his childhood being brought forward in his mind, never truly lost. My mum shakes her head and smiles, her Irish connection goes further back. A family from Ulster entered the US through Ellis Island in hopes of a new start nearly 200 years ago. That led to her, which led to my sister and I. *Mo dheirfiúr agus mise*. All these people, these families, these stories has led to the four of us. My wonderful, multilingual, multicultural and international family. We are connected to world, to our own world that we create. Home is where the heart is. My heart, *mo chroí*, has been lifted by these connections to these wonderful people and these beautiful places. The thought of losing that terrifies me more than I can say.

Ironic isn't it? It seems to go against the natural order. We've been brought closer together by the risk of a hard border.

I was born after the Good Friday Agreement was signed. It has always existed in my life, it has kept me inexperienced of the turmoil and strife that those before knew so well. That my Dad always mentions when we drive across the border, when all we can notice is the change in the colour of lines at the side of the road. Lines and colours, another piece of irony. Of beautiful, tragic *íoróin*. Two of the things, decisive symbols, that were once interwoven into the very fabric of The Trouble's are now a small symbol of peace and cooperation because they have taken the place of an armed military station.

I don't ever want to know what crossing a hard border is like. I don't want to be further separated from a country that I spent so much of my childhood in. That I proudly hold in *mo chroí*. I don't want to be shut out, I want to be let in.

But throughout all this language discovery and adventure, I've learned something incredible, in more ways than one.

An rud is annamh is iontach.

I know what it means, I know how to pronounce it, hard as that seems. I know its translation isn't exact, that it can be interpreted as optimistic or cynical. Now isn't that apt? We take words and we make them our own. We decide the place we want to call home, but we're not always listened to.

There were majorities in Scotland and Northern Ireland for remain. Because we know the consequences of Brexit's supposed gain. Our votes may have as well been uncounted, because our voices were unheard, we asked to stay. They didn't listen.

An rud is annamh is iontach. The thing that is rare, is wonderful. Life's fleeting moments that pass you by, the ones that make you laugh, the ones that make you cry. I hope the closeness I've found with my sister, *mo dheirfiúr*, isn't fleeting. I hope the fear and uncertainty I feel now, is. I hope

my family can find a place in this ever-changing world that works for us. At the end of the day, that's all anyone can hope for. To know you and your family are safe, to know you can be proud of where you come from and of where you want to go. To speak the language of your heart, to have more than one language in there. To be so incredibly blessed to have more than one place in this amazing world to call home.

I just want to know what is going to happen. Scotland is my home and Ireland is my home.

Please, *le do thoil*, don't make me choose.